

# Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

*Jessica Bourque 271-2104*

**HB 294**, relative to the processing of absentee ballots.

**Hearing Date:** April 1, 2025

**Time Opened:** 9:46 a.m.

**Time Closed:** 9:57 a.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Gray, Lang, Rochefort, Perkins Kwoka and Long

**Members of the Committee Absent:** None

**Bill Analysis:** This bill removes the ability of 10 voters to postpone the processing of absentee ballots.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. Daniels

Rep. Dargie

Rep. Petrigno

Rep. W. MacDonald

Rep. Sheehan

Rep. Schamberg

Rep. Flanagan

Rep. B. Sullivan

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**Who supports the bill:** Rep. Gary Daniels, Erin Hennessey, Peter Basiliere, Linda Bundy, Kaylie Efstratiou, Olivia Zink, Sarah Burke Cohen, Sarah Chouinard

**Who opposes the bill:** No one

**Summary of testimony presented:**

**Representative Gary Daniels, Prime Sponsor, Hillsborough District 43**

- This bill removes the first line of RSA 659:49, II. This provision postpones the processing of absentee ballots until after the polls close but before the counting of all ballots. If this provision is utilized, it causes significant delays in reporting election results.
- Milford is one of the towns that is open for 14 hours. In the last election, the last voter cast their vote at 8:45 p.m., and the official results were not known until a couple hours later. If the RSA 659:49, II provision had been utilized, it could have easily been 2:00 a.m. before the results were reported.
- Asking volunteers to stay at the polls until late at night or early in the morning is a burden we shouldn't put on volunteers who have given their time to help at the polls.

- The second part of RSA 659:49, II, which requires the moderators to post the time the processing of absentee ballots will begin, is still in the RSA.

### **Pete Basiliere, Milford Town Moderator**

- Milford has over 10,000 voters and 140 volunteers.
- Polls are open from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., which is already a long day for volunteers. Asking volunteers to stay late into the night is a lot to ask.
- If Milford had to postpone the counting of ballots during the last election, Mr. Basiliere estimates that they would have been there until well after 2:00 a.m.
- Processing absentee ballots is an open process, and anyone who wishes to observe the processing of these ballots has ample opportunity and notification to do so.

### **Linda Bundy, Antrim**

- Doesn't believe allowing 10 voters to slow down election results serves any useful purpose.
- Slowing down results can reduce voter confidence.
- As a ballot clerk, she has witnessed firsthand the transparency of absentee ballot processing.
- This bill has bipartisan support.

### **Kaylie Efstratiou, Open Democracy**

- This is bipartisan legislation.
- Allowing the postponement of vote counting results in a delay of election results, which in turn leads to significantly longer hours for election workers and a delay in the announcement of election results when this provision is utilized.
- Doesn't believe that 10 voters is necessarily representative of an entire ward, so it doesn't make sense to grant this level of influence to such a small group.

### **Sarah Chouinard, America Votes**

- This is a common-sense solution that ensures election officials can perform their duties effectively and helps eliminate unnecessary delays.